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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MAY 16, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for May 16, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

OZGUR GUNDEM: Cemal Kavak, DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) Istanbul Provincial Chairperson, said that European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) decision on Ocalan's trial was a timely opportunity for Turkey to resolve the Kurdish issue peacefully. The Kurdish issue cannot be solved through force and violence, but rather, "democratic means should be implemented to achieve results", said Kavak. Meanwhile, lawyers and jurists in Iraq reportedly held a press conference in the Ocalan Culture and Arts Center in Baghdad, where the President of the Iraqi Human Rights Association stated that Iraqi people would struggle not only for human rights, but also for the rights and freedom of Kurdish people, and for the person who represents them, namely Ocalan. Kurds in Lebanon sent 4,000 signatures to the ECHR to support the court's verdict.

EKSPRES/ ZAMAN / BOLGE / CUMHURIYET / SABAH (GUNEY): MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) Adana Provincial Chairperson Yilmaz Tankut described the ECHR's Ocalan decision as a move synonymous with degradation of the honor and dignity of Turkey and branded this decision as mere provocation. These remarks came during a press meeting held to announce the enrolling of new 150 members, some of who severed ties with AKP to join the MHP party lines. AKP Adana Provincial Chairperson Abdullah Dogru criticized Tankut's remarks and reminded that it was MHP and the coalition government that "nourished" Ocalan in Imrali Island after he was arrested in 1999. Meanwhile, IP (Workers' Party) Adana Chairperson was also highly critical of the decision passed by the ECHR and blamed the GOT for showing impotence regarding the development.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Soldiers reportedly buried nine alleged terrorists who were killed during a conflict that broke out in Ovacik district of Tunceli in a cemetery under tight security measures, rather than returning the bodies to their families. The families and people were allegedly not granted entrance to the cemetery.

HURRIYET: During a military operation deploying a reported 10,000 Turkish soldiers in Bingol, a conflict between the terrorists and the Turkish military killed three soldiers and wounded four soldiers. (Note: This article is from May 14 edition.)

CUMHURIYET: In Batman, Murat Karayalcin, national leader of the SHP (Social Democratic People's Party), complained about official discourse concerned with such as issues such as "religion," "flag," "sect," and "secularism," that customarily dominate Turkish politics. He added that people should start debating and discussing the Kurdish issue everywhere in Turkey.

HURRIYET: State officials have criticized the labor union, KESK (Confederation of Public Sector Workers' Unions), for holding its Ordinary General Convention in the absence of a Turkish flag and for failing to play the national anthem at the commencement of the event. Moreover, Tuncer Bakirhan's (DEHAP leader) speech there aroused anger and more criticism when Bakirhan used a courtesy title before the name of Ocalan. (Note: This article is from May 14 edition).

OZGUR GUNDEM: In February 2005, 159 DEHAP members, who were traveling to Mardin to attend the court hearings of the Ugur Kaymaz case in Kiziltepe, were allegedly stopped, searched and barred from attending the hearings by the Duzova Jandarma Station in Cizre, Sirnak province. This was done, according to a Jandarma report submitted to the Cizre Prosecutor (CP), "to safeguard the members' security." DEHAP members filed a suit with the CP claiming their political rights were violated and that they were allegedly branded as "pro-terrorists" at the Station. The CP, finding no breach of their rights or by Jandarma officials, dismissed the charges. [Note: Meanwhile, Ministry of Internal Affairs reportedly announced that proceedings of the case regarding Ugur Kaymaz would be moved from Mardin to Eskisehir due to security concerns.]

OZGUR GUNDEM: Speculation that the Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) Administration will be closed has reportedly arisen, and Ozgur Gundem reports that 3 billion dollars will need to be spent every year in order to be able to finish the project by 2010. Considering budgetary uncertainty, it is not

clear if the GOT will be able to afford that amount. Although the massive Project took shape in 1980s as a multi-sector and socioeconomic regional development program, the State possibly used the project to counter terror related issues as well, the paper speculates, by flooding many settlements and spaces in the region, adding to the displacement of people.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Three people were wounded in a gun attack that broke out due to a dispute over the use of a pasture in Bismil district of Diyarbakir.

HURRIYET: Eleven members of BAK (Global Peace and Justice Commission) organized a bicycle tour between two districts of Istanbul calling on the GOT to close down Incirlik Airbase.

ZAMAN / HURRIYET / CUMHURİYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: PM Erdogan visited Sanliurfa on Saturday to attend the "First GAP Business and Investment Forum," held at Harran University. On the way to the University, groups (including many children) stopped Erdogan's convoy two times, shouting, "We want schools, we want jobs, and we do not want to turn into inhalers or thieves." During his address at the forum, Erdogan said in this region where languages and religions has forged a common ground, the GAP had become the "brand" of the region. Erdogan replied to criticism that had been voiced by the SP and MHP before his arrival to the city, saying, "People accusing us of treason are the ones who are actually engaging in treason." (Note: This article is from May 15 editions.)

OZGUR GUNDEM: Three police officers were wounded on Saturday at 10 p.m. during a bomb and gun attack on a police car that was on patrol in Dogubeyazit district of Agri. (Note: This article is from May 15 edition).

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